

DELAWARE COMMISSION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
MEETING MINUTES
MAY 22, 2007

Members Present: Morris, Carroll, Endres, Harden, Kitson, Lank, Lardizzone, Magner, Newstadt, Spitzfaden, Thompson, Wasson and Webb

Members Excused: Ennis and Timberman

Staff Present: Davila and Reid

Guests: Al Carter (SOS), Ron Sarg (MOAA), Bill McMullen (AF Sergeants Association), Ed Moczulski (LP Lo-DEL), Richard Citron (Director VA Medical Center), Dawn Premock (AMVETS - Operation America Rising), Frank Davidson (KWVA), Ben Gottfried, Bill Bus and John Dill (Warrant Officers Association), Jim Testerman (Delaware National Guard Retired Association), and Craig Dusenbery (MOAA)

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to our Nations Flag.

Chairman opened the meeting by thanking all the Commissioners that were able to attend the Memorial Day Parade in Newark. He received an e-mail from Vice-Chairman Ennis and his recuperation is going well. On Friday, May 18, 2007, Chapter 1787 MOPH presented a popcorn machine to the Veterans Home. Later that afternoon, Barbara Lifflander presented the Home with a copy of the 1917 "I Want You" poster by James Flag.

Mr. Citron reported on the status of the upcoming clinic in Dover; they are having difficulties getting permits and do not think they will open in mid-July as originally anticipated. Now they are looking at sometime in September. The contract for the clinics in Millsboro and Seaford will run out at the end of September 2007. They are currently looking for property to establish a clinic and recruiting for VA staff for the clinic. They did get their budget for the Wilmington facility in late February and it is a very good budget. The HOPTel will move from an outside building into the main building and there are plans to expand it from six beds to 12 beds. Chairman Morris asked about locations for the new Sussex Co. clinic and discussion followed. Commissioner Webb brought up the subject of parking at the Wilmington VA and Mr. Citron explained the steps that have been taken to resolve the issue.

Ms. Premock discussed "Operation America Rising" and asked for assistance in spreading the word. More information may be obtained at <http://www.americarising.org>. The Delaware "Operation America Rising" event is scheduled for July 7, 2007, 11:00 am – 9:00 pm, at Legislative Mall in Dover.

Mr. McMullen reported on the AF Sergeants Association Conference.

Mr. Davidson reported that HB 129 was re-introduced again this year, but with the State's poor finances, he does not think it looks very good. He expressed his dissatisfaction that the Ribbon-cutting Ceremony for the Veterans Home was by invitation only.

Mr. Carter explained the logistics that contributed to the event being limited to invitation only. He reported on a meeting with Mr. Citron that would allow them to vamp the admissions process into the home from 18 months to a year. He explained the details behind the process.

Mr. Reid explained in detail what was expected to happen at the Veterans Home. Mr. Davila requested that Mr. Citron further explain the start-up process. Mr. Citron offered his experiences and recommendations. Mr. Reid reported on the hiring and the current staffing progress for the Veterans Home. He also reported on events that have occurred at the Home; as well as how inspections have been progressing. He also provided information on donations that have been made and a banquet that he attended. Mr. Reid provided admissions information to the Commissioners. He explained aspects of the assessment process and what needs to take place in order to have the Veterans Home fully up and operational. Mr. Reid invited the Commissioners and their significant others to a dinner as part of the shakedown process for opening the dining facility. The Delaware Veterans Home donation list was distributed and discussed.

MOTION BY LARDIZZONE TO ACCEPT THE VETERANS HOME DONATION LIST, SECONDED BY SPITZFADEN, MOTION CARRIED.

Mr. Moczulski thanked those who attended the annual People's Place award's breakfast. He stated that several of the residents at the Home of the Brave were hired to work at the Veterans Home.

Mr. Sarg reported that MOAA was in Washington, DC, on April 18, 2007, to help support veterans' benefits. He thanked all those who supported their fundraising. They awarded two \$1,000 scholarships to Junior ROTC cadets at Smyrna High School.

MOTION BY HARDEN TO ACCEPT APRIL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES, SECONDED BY KITSON, MOTION CARRIED.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

CEMETERY COMMITTEE

Commissioner Newstadt reported that a decision has been made to replace the Cemetery tree & bench markers that have faded, with bronze markers. Mr. Davila provided details of the impending marker replacements. Commissioner Newstadt reminded everyone of the ceremony at the Northern Cemetery on Memorial Day at 2:00 pm. The next Family Advisory Cemetery Committee (FACC) meeting in Sussex Co. is scheduled for August 22, 2007, 6:00 pm. The Northern FACC will meet on October 17, 2007, 1:00 pm.

COMMEMORATIVE AFFAIRS

Chairman Morris reported that the American Legion has a speaker lined up for the ceremony at the Delaware Memorial Bridge. There will be two flyovers that day; two C-130s at the Bridge and two Helicopters at the Northern Cemetery.

FINANCE AND LOGISTICS

No report.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Commissioner Carroll reported that the balance in the Veterans Home Fund is \$67,230.77 and the amount in the Friends of Delaware Veterans Home is \$484,488.00. Mr. Davila reported that he attended an affair at Legislative Hall where \$4,900 was donated by State Senators and Representatives. The money will be deposited into the Delaware Veterans Home Fund. There was discussion about who was controlling the monies in both accounts.

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

Chairman Morris reported on SB 48 (military pensions and personal income); HB 55 (relating to burial at the Delaware Veterans Cemetery); and HB 136 (State pension plan). He announced that the new Chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee is Speaker Terry Spence. In addition, he encourages all veterans to contact their legislators and push for veterans' issues that are being reviewed. Mr. Carroll asked that the Commission submit legislation for the MOPH, Department of Delaware, to have a highway designated within the State to recognize Purple Heart recipients.

MOTION BY CARROLL TO SUBMIT LEGISLATION REQUESTING THAT I-95 THROUGH DELAWARE, CONNECTING PENNSYLVANIA TO MARYLAND, BE RE-DESIGNATED AS THE PURPLE HEART TRAIL, SECONDED BY LARDIZZONE, MOTION CARRIED.

PERSONNEL

Commissioner Lardizzone reported that since the Equipment Mechanic IV position was posted, only one person applied (who was not a veteran), so the job has been re-posted.

MONUMENTS & MEMORIALS

No report.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

No report.

BY-LAWS

Chairman Morris reported that he signed the recently updated By-Laws today.

ORGANIZATIONAL REPORTS

Magner (AMVETS) – AMVETS Department of Delaware held their State Convention in Millsboro at Post 2. Ray Landon was elected State Commander, Sherri Taylor was elected 1st Vice, and Dawn Premock was elected 2nd Vice. AMVETS will be purchasing a flagpole for the Northern Cemetery, along with three flags that will be provided on a continual basis. Also, we will be purchasing two bronze marker plaques for the Cemeteries.

Carroll (MOPH) – The Department Convention will be on June 16, 2007, at 11:00 am, Dover AFB. He also reported that the original location for the National Convention in NY was unacceptable; there will be more information to come.

Lardizzone (DAV) – Reported that he attended the Connecticut DAV Convention from May 3-5, 2007. He will also be attending the New Jersey State Convention in Atlantic City, June 13-15, 2007. DAV at the Ball Game will be at the Blue Rocks on June 17, 2007, 1:30 PM; there have been 93 tickets sold. The Delaware Convention will be held June 22-23, 2007; one day at the Department Headquarters in Camden and one day at the Sheraton in Dover.

Thompson (MCL) – The Kent County Marine Corps League will be holding a ceremony on Monday, May 28, 2007, 9:00 am, at the Sharon Hills Cemetery. The guest speaker will be BG Wiley of the Delaware National Guard and the Dover AFB will provide the firing squad. He added that this is the 11th year they have done this program.

Kitson (VFW) – The State Convention is June 8-9, 2007, and the Grand Scratch for the Delaware Military Order of the Cooties is June 10, 2007. The National Convention will be held August 18-23, 2007, and the Supreme Scratch for the Military Order of the Cooties will be August 23-26, 2007.

Webb (VVA) – BG Wiley will be the guest speaker for the Memorial Day Ceremony at the Northern Cemetery.

Harden (WAVES) – She confirmed that they plan to attend both the Bridge and Cemetery ceremonies. She reported that the VA Patient Carnival was very successful.

Wasson (DELVETS) – Reported that in addition to participating in the Bridge Ceremony, his Post is having a ceremony on Saturday, May 26, 2007.

Endres (40 & 8) – Thanked Tony Davila and Dean Reid for providing a briefing at the American Legion Post 2 meeting.

Newstadt (JWV) – Announced that the American flags will be replaced at the gravesites at the Faulk Rd Cemetery. Sunday was the annual installation and luncheon of the Delaware JWV; he was made the Vice Commander. He presented a MOAA certificate and plaque to an outstanding JROTC cadet at Glasgow High School.

Morris (American Legion) – Reported that one of the guest speakers at the MOPH Convention will be a three star general who had been in charge of the Walter Reed Medical Facility at one time. Chairman Morris was reappointed as the American Legion State Financial Officer.

Mr. Davidson reported for the KWVA. He announced that on May 28, 2007, 11:00 am, they will have their annual picnic at Bellevue State Park. There will be a department meeting at the Rehoboth Library on June 25, 2007, and that evening there will be a special ceremony at the bandstand. They will also attend the Wilmington Parade.

NEW BUSINESS

Chairman Morris noted that there have been problems in the past with donated items at the Cemeteries. He stressed that they need to standardize the process of receiving and acknowledging donated items at the Veterans Home, as well as the placement of plaques. Discussion followed.

Commissioner Spitzfaden brought up the issue of the English language being used as the primary language and thinks veterans should take a stand to enforce this.

Commissioner Carroll made the Commission aware of a Cemetery in Wilmington that has veterans buried in it and is not being properly maintained.

Mr. Gottfried requested that the Commission in some way recognize the employees at the Wilmington VA Hospital and discussion followed. There was also discussion about 100% disabled veterans not paying taxes in other states, but having to pay them here in Delaware.

Commissioner Wasson reported that it had come to his attention that the JROTC programs were going to be shut down and asked if anyone had any information. Discussion followed.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: JUNE 19, 2007 (11:00 AM)

**LOCATION: Robbins Bldg, 802 Silver Lake Blvd, Suite 100
Dover, DE**

ADJOURNED